

1am-misc. 1562

Is It Worth While?

An Address Before the W. M. U. in
Convention, Hot Springs, Ark.,
May the 14th, 1908



By
MRS. MAUD REYNOLDS McLURE
Principal of W. M. U. Training School

IS IT WORTH WHILE?

An Address Before The W. M. U. in
Convention, Hot Springs, Ark.,
May 14th, 1908, by Mrs. Maud
Reynolds McLure, Principal
of W. M. U. Training School.

I bear a message of love and gratitude to you, dear sisters of the Southland from the faculty and student-body of the Woman's Missionary Union Training School. One year ago this institution was launched by your interest, your enthusiasm, your prayers, and, through the months that have followed, your thoughtful care has been ever around it, while we who have manned the barque have felt the strength and uplift of your earnest intercession for us at the Throne of Grace. And so our ship has sailed prosperously, for we have felt that the Master was aboard, and no matter what storm should threaten, He would whisper, "Peace, be still."

With the new problems of the new civilization has come, as a sign of religious progress, the belief that a woman expecting to enter any field of Christian work, whether Sunday School, Home or Foreign, should be specially equipped for service. The blessedness of fitting our women to do their highest and best Christian work was so strongly laid on your hearts that you have assumed this responsibility, and I bring you the glad news that your efforts are being rewarded, your prayers are being answered

—our school is doing the work you planned it to accomplish.

One whom I greatly revered, once said, "Only living things grow. Rocks accumulate; they mechanically increase from without, making angular forms. Life, on the other hand, works from within. Plants, animals and souls develop into organic structure of rounded forms, through the agency of an internal circulating nutrition. In plants this power is sap, in animals it is blood, and in Christians, grace. The favorite figure under which God's people are spoken of in the Bible is the garden, not a set of tools or a factory. They are called in Jeremiah, 'the right seed,' a 'noble vine and vineyard.' In Isaiah a 'branch of God's planting,' and 'trees of righteousness.' Christians must grow naturally, normally. We are not to be hot-house plants, but hardy plants." And it is for this steady, healthy growth that the Training School stands.

As our first year's work is near completion these vital questions arise, "Has the training of the young women resulted in the growth we anticipated?" "Are the students really better fitted for service by the year spent in the school?" These can, in my judgment, be frankly answered in the affirmative, for I believe no woman has entered the school, but will carry away deep and lasting benefits that shall be transformed into blessings for others.

Let us examine the practical, intellectual and spiritual phases of their train-

ing and judge from the outcome if this statement be true, and if the thing is worth while.

Good results have come from the domestic science course, as in sewing, the lessons have been planned in such a way that each student could learn the best method of teaching children and ignorant mothers how to sew. These lessons will be most valuable for use in slum missions, in mountain schools, and in heathen countries. This year the cooking lessons have included an invalid diet, that the missionary may, in her house to house visiting, be able to minister to the physical needs of the sick and suffering, and I could tell sweet stories of how the students have in this respect been like angels of mercy.

The progress made by the student-body in music has been creditable, and many are now able to play the hymns at our chapel exercises, and at the mission Sunday Schools. The interest in sightsinging has increased, and I have been gratified by the statement from several, that their first work done while learning the foreign languages will be to translate the songs for children learned in the school, that all nations of the earth may sing the Training School songs.

Great improvement can be noted in the ability of each individual to speak before a body of women, such improvement being largely due to the constant practice of leading the daily devotions of the school, as well as to the lessons in

elocution. Many were given to the habit of expressing their thoughts in a confidential tone so soft and low that only those nearest could ascertain whether there was being delivered a lecture in Sanskrit or a recitation from Mother Goose. A year's elocution has worked wonders in these timid ones, and I venture to hope that when they leave the school, not only will they be able to make themselves heard, but that they will have thoughts worthy of expression. This hope is strengthened by the very high commendation accorded the work of our students by their Professors in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who have, in the class room and outside, mentioned honorably our young women. To dispel any doubt of the capacity of women for grasping the difficult studies of the Seminary which are included in our course, may be cited the fine grades made by our student-body in all examinations. After the March examinations Dr. Sampey (whose subject is counted one of the most difficult in the whole curriculum) announced to his class that out of fourteen students from the Training School taking the examination in Old Testament Interpretation, eleven made grades from 90 to 98, and three made a grade of 100. I have only to add that of one hundred and eight men in the same class and taking the same examination, one man made a grade of 100, for you to see that the standard of excellence among our women is high. Further com-

ment on their intellectual development and ability is unnecessary. I must say that a woman with limited or poor education may gain something from our course of study, but unless she has a really good grammar school foundation the best results cannot follow. Just here I would suggest to a church or association planning to send a girl to the Training School, that she be examined, and unless she has had a good grammar, or "common" school course, send her to a grammar school first, and afterwards to the Training School. Otherwise much disappointment will follow.

While the practical and intellectual sides of their natures are developing, the spiritual side is not neglected in their busy lives, and one has only to look into their calm, cheerful faces to realize that the Master is to them "Nearer than breathing." I am sure they have been a blessing to the city of Louisville, for through them as they have gone in and out with their message of love and cheer, tired, discouraged ones have been comforted, children have been taught the Word of God and given ideals that, in spite of their wretched environment, will, by God's blessings, make strong men and women of these little ones. Souls have been won to Christ through these women whose lives are surrendered to God, and who are daily giving to Him fuller, deeper service.

Perhaps I place too great emphasis on the practical mission work of the

school, but after all, is not soul-winning the end to which the study and training lead? And can there be any higher ambition than to seek and to save the lost? Every Saturday afternoon is given by the students to visiting from house to house in the vicinity of the mission Sunday Schools, and I think no part of the week holds more interest than the hours spent in this way.

We have in our midst a gentle, sweet woman who has been greatly used of God, and it was through deep sorrow that she attained the abundant life that is now hers. Years ago she was left fatherless under a cloud of special blackness, its darkness relieved only by the beauty and strength of the mother's Christian character and courage. Often when awake at night, through the stillness, the children would hear the voice of the mother praying for her little ones, so it is not surprising that this girl early felt the impression for mission work. From the soil of this heart anguish, nurtured and tended by the mother's prayers, grew up the young tree that is now bearing such rich fruit. This young woman hopes to go to Foreign Fields, but during her time of preparation and waiting, she has been about the King's business, for in Louisville many souls have been led to Christ through her, and to homes in which sin and strife ran riot she has brought peace and comfort. Through her influence in the mission Sunday School in which she is now working, missionary day exer-

cises were held, and for the first time in the history of the Sunday School a collection for Foreign Missions was taken. That collection which was given by the poor of their poverty amounted to over thirteen dollars.

In a recent lecture Dr. Rufus Weaver of Cincinnati, said, "It is not the Baptist Church or the Methodist Church that the Catholic Church fears, but it does fear these women that are followed by the children in the streets, and that go into the homes and steal the hearts of the mothers. You can shut your door in the face of a priest or a preacher, but you can not shut it in the face of a woman who comes with love in her heart and flowers in her hands to nurse your sick child, or to lift the burden of care from your tired shoulders."

To carry the gospel to Catholics so hedged about by forms and superstitions is not an easy task, and so the story of a Catholic woman brought to Jesus by one of our students may interest you. A woman of refinement and some education came to service at the Flower Mission last winter, and was there met by Miss Leachman, the noble city missionary who lives in the Training School. Miss Leachman discovered that the woman's husband was out of work and that she had five hungry little ones at home. Material aid was sent for the immediate necessities of the family, and later one of the Training School girls was sent to visit the home. Mrs. A. was scrubbing the floor when the

visitor entered, so that the first call was made standing in the hallway. As they talked the children crowded round and the mother scolded them, and sent them impatiently away. Realizing that she had lost control of herself before a stranger, Mrs. A. apologized, but said, "When you are worried like I am the least thing makes you lose your temper. But you don't know what trouble is or what it is to have five children go hungry." "No," said the missionary, "I don't know all your trials, but I do know what trouble is. Now, when I am troubled I go to Christ and He comforts me. I wonder if you know how to go to Him?" Mrs. A.'s face clouded and she said she was a Catholic and didn't know just how to go to Christ Himself. So, asking permission, the missionary read passages from the New Testament, prayed with her, and on going left the book with her, Mrs. A. seizing it eagerly in both hands. After a few visits from the missionary this dear woman had found the great Burden Bearer and had come out into sweet and full assurance of salvation. To the missionary she seemed a new woman. All her life, she said, she had confessed her sins to the priest and prayed to the Virgin Mary most earnestly, but had never found peace until she learned to talk to Jesus, and then He came into her heart and stayed there. She was in daily expectation of a new care in her life—another little one in her arms—so there was joy in the home, when, about three weeks

after her conversion the husband secured work. All the week she went happily about her work praying fervently that God would let her husband come home on Saturday night, sober, for she felt she could not bear her own pain if he should be in the home intoxicated. In telling the missionary of it she said, "I was sure God would, in some way, put something around my husband to keep whiskey away from him, for you had told me He would shield me. Then I remembered you had read me from this book that if I would abide in Him, He would abide in me and I could ask anything of Him and He would give it to me. So I was sure my husband would come home sober. Saturday night came, and when John staggered in drunk, I thought there was no use trying any more, Jesus would never hear me. But I went and got my Bible that you had given me, and I turned and turned the leaves, looking for the verse about abiding in Christ, and I couldn't find it. I knew it was there, because you had said it was, and had read it to me. After awhile I thought, 'through all my life of Catholicism and sin and waywardness Christ had never forgotten me, nor ceased to love me, and here I had only been serving Him for three weeks and the first thing I ask Him to do for me and He doesn't do it, I am ready to go back on Him, and give Him up.' So I fell on my knees and begged Christ to forgive me for being so wicked as to doubt Him, and if the drunkenness of my husband

was the cross I was to bear for Him, to give me grace to bear it."

The baby has come, but otherwise the conditions of that home are unchanged, save that the mother has found a refuge on the Rock of Ages, and this alone has changed her whole life, and I might say her countenance also, for the missionary tells me that her face is beautiful in its serenity.

These are but a few of the many instances that crowd to my lips, showing the effective personal work done by our Training School girls as they "try their armor" in Louisville, but who can tell what God hath wrought in and through their beautiful lives?

As I live among them and catch inspiration from the atmosphere which they create, as I see their sacrifices, their lives of consecration, their constant following of high ideals of service, I can but believe that, as the years go on, the students of the Woman's Missionary Union Training School will give to the world a sensible spiritual uplift, and will girdle the earth with an influence that cannot be measured.

